
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

1.1 OVERVIEW

This Resource Management Plan (RMP) was developed for the Potholes Reservoir area (Potholes Management Area), in Grant County, Washington, to provide management guidance for the land and water resources under U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) jurisdiction at Potholes Reservoir (Figure 1.1-1 RMP Location Map). The primary purpose of Potholes Reservoir is to receive and store irrigation return, flood and public surface waters and to provide irrigation water supply to the East Columbia Basin and the South Columbia Basin Irrigation Districts via the Potholes East Canal. The United States, acting through the Secretary of Interior and the irrigation districts will operate the Potholes Reservoir to fulfill primary purpose obligations in an efficient manner. The Potholes Reservoir will be operated in a safe and effective manner while serving these purposes.

Reclamation will meet the contractual irrigation commitments related to operation of the Potholes Reservoir. Commitments to collect return waters from the East and Quincy Districts will also be met. The reservoir will be operated within established constraints on water surface elevation necessary to meet irrigation commitments, and assure public safety and protection of property. Reclamation will meet other resource needs as feasible within the constraints of these objectives. Once these obligations have been fulfilled, Reclamation turns its attention to other resources like fish and wildlife and their habitats, cultural resources, recreational activities, and educational opportunities.

Since 1952, the land and water resources found at Potholes Reservoir have been managed under a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the United States, acting through Reclamation, and the State of Washington. Under the MOA, the state - acting through the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (SPRC) and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) - agreed to be partners in the administration of the lands and waters at Potholes Reservoir for public recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, and related responsibilities. The existing MOA expires in 2002. Under Reclamation policy, any new management agreement will require the state to follow an approved RMP. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) assisted Reclamation with the development of this RMP by preparing the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act Report (CAR) for the Potholes Reservoir Management Area; the CAR (Appendix A) is in accordance with the provisions of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (FWCA) (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.). Reclamation supports the completion of this RMP for the Potholes Reservoir Management Area to direct future management decisions.

1.2 AUTHORITY

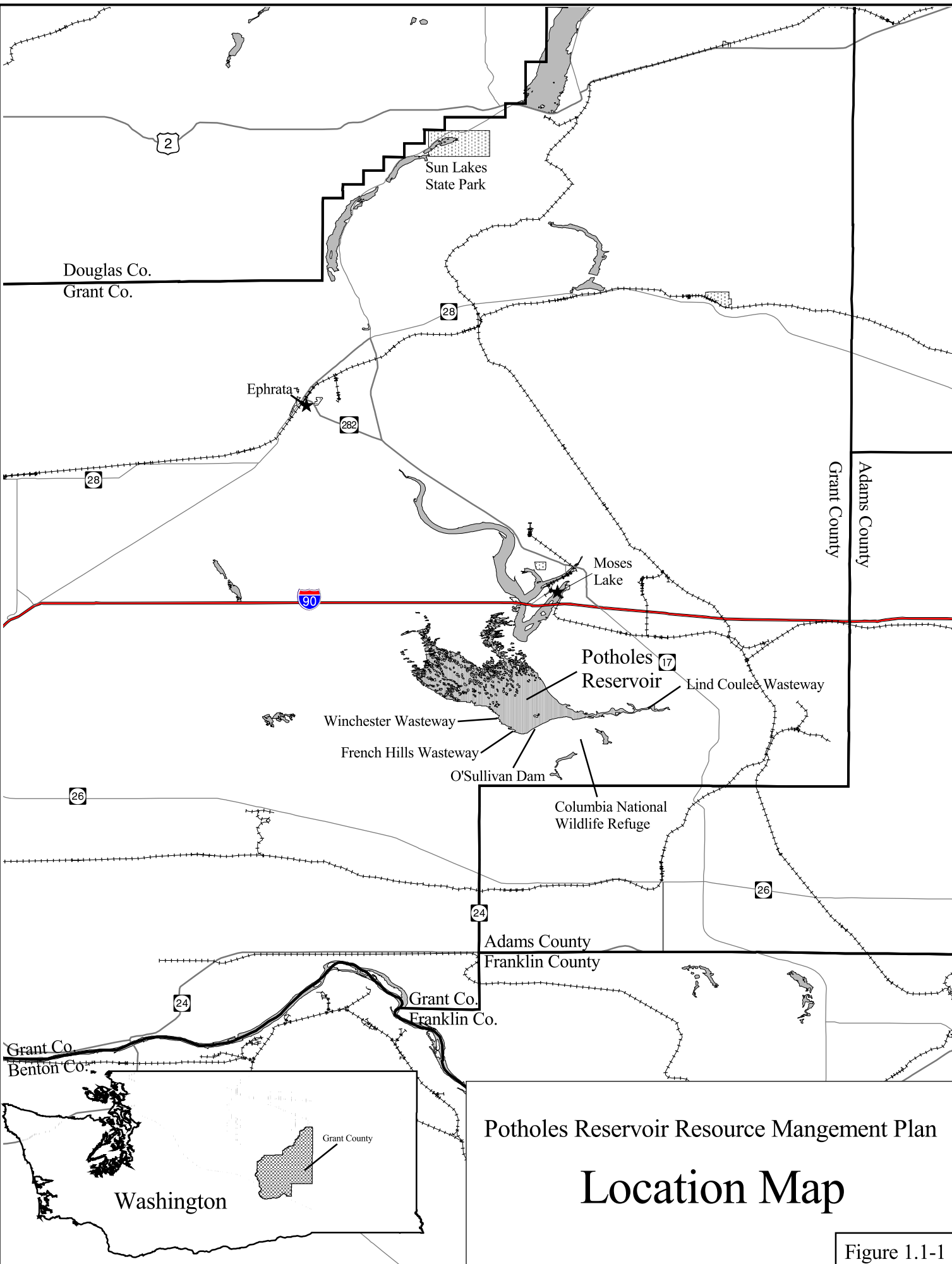
The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), established by Congress in 1969, provides a mandate and a framework for federal agencies to consider all reasonably foreseeable environmental effects of their actions; hence an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) were completed for management of the Potholes Reservoir. The document focused on issues and concerns identified by the public and involved resource agencies during the scoping process. Reclamation initiated the public involvement efforts by collecting information from the public and representatives from the state and federal agencies through a series of workshops, interviews, and consultations. Responding to input from the public and the agencies' concerns, an Ad Hoc work group, Reclamation, WDFW, and SPRC developed integrated management policies and actions to ensure the use of Reclamation lands and waters at Potholes Reservoir maintain, protect, and enhance natural resources as well as provide a mixture of recreational opportunities.

The AD Hoc work group, consisting of a broad cross-section of resource, Tribal, and local agency personnel, addressed both the public and the agencies' concerns by identifying the goals and objectives of the RMP. The EIS informed decision makers and the public of the impacts associated with each alternative. Based on the outcome of Reclamation's environmental decision process, this resulting RMP was developed for the preferred alternative. As approved and adapted by Reclamation, this RMP authorizes the coordination of adaptive management to ensure all future decisions in the planning area will include a multiple-use approach to natural resources.

1.3 APPLICABILITY

An EIS was completed for Potholes Reservoir to analyze and discuss the environmental consequences associated with three management alternatives (plus the no action alternative). Reclamation study team and decision makers selected Alternative B - The Preferred Alternative. Therefore, the scope of this RMP will *only* discuss the establishment and integration of Alternative B, as selected through the EIS process, into the Potholes Reservoir Management Area. The RMP captures the overall resource goals and objectives of Alternative B and examines each Land Management Area (LMA) individually across the entire Potholes Management Area rather than examining interrelated resources found in predetermined sections of the management area. This technique is referred to as a broad-scale approach or programmatic and is particularly effective in natural resource management (Haufler et al., 1996).

Four management actions remained constant in all the alternatives because of existing laws, regulatory requirements, or Reclamation policy. Consequently, they are also included in the preferred alternative; the understanding is as follows:



Potholes Reservoir Resource Mangement Plan

Location Map

Figure 1.1-1

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- 1) Continue to meet all contractual obligations of the 1968 contracts between the U.S. and Columbia Basin Project (CBP) irrigation districts.
 - 2) Continue to operate Potholes Reservoir in accordance with Reclamation law and the Columbia Basin Project Act dated March 10, 1943 (Chapter 14, 57 STAT, 14).
 - 3) Continue to meet existing operational constraints placed on Potholes Reservoir water surface elevations due to CBP contractual obligations.
 - 4) Continue to administer Reclamation lands and waters through an updated MOA between the United States and Washington State. Day-to-day resource and recreation management activities will continue to be provided by the SPRC and WDFW with oversight by Reclamation.

1.4 PURPOSE

The purpose of this RMP is to provide management guidance and jurisdictional and administrative boundaries for the land and water resources at Potholes Reservoir for a 10-year period. Management actions outlined by the RMP will be carried out as soon as the plan is accepted by Reclamation. Revisions to the plan should occur every 10 years, but no later than 15 years after the approval of the original plan. In the interim, the RMP will act as a “living document” that may be amended as needed by land managers and resource personnel with jurisdictional authority within the Potholes Reservoir Management Area. Additionally, the RMP will provide direction for future proposed projects (while monitoring the progress of management prescriptions as they become implemented) in the Potholes Reservoir Management Area.

Changes to the EIS may require supplementary NEPA analysis and subsequent public involvement. This scenario will require an addendum document to the original EIS but will not require the preparation of a new EIS. NEPA documents do not expire; the original EIS can be supplemented with the more recent information. However, some management actions (outlined by the RMP) may require site-specific NEPA analysis, particularly with actions that require ground-disturbing activities. While these projects will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, a new NEPA document will be required that pertains only to the management action(s) being proposed. The author should refer the readers back to the original EIS for more information; this process is known as “tiering,” and it prevents the unnecessary duplication of documents. The authority to supplement the existing EIS or tier to a new EIS will be the responsibility WDFW and the SPRC with oversight from Reclamation.

1.5 PLAN STRUCTURE

The RMP is organized into seven chapters:

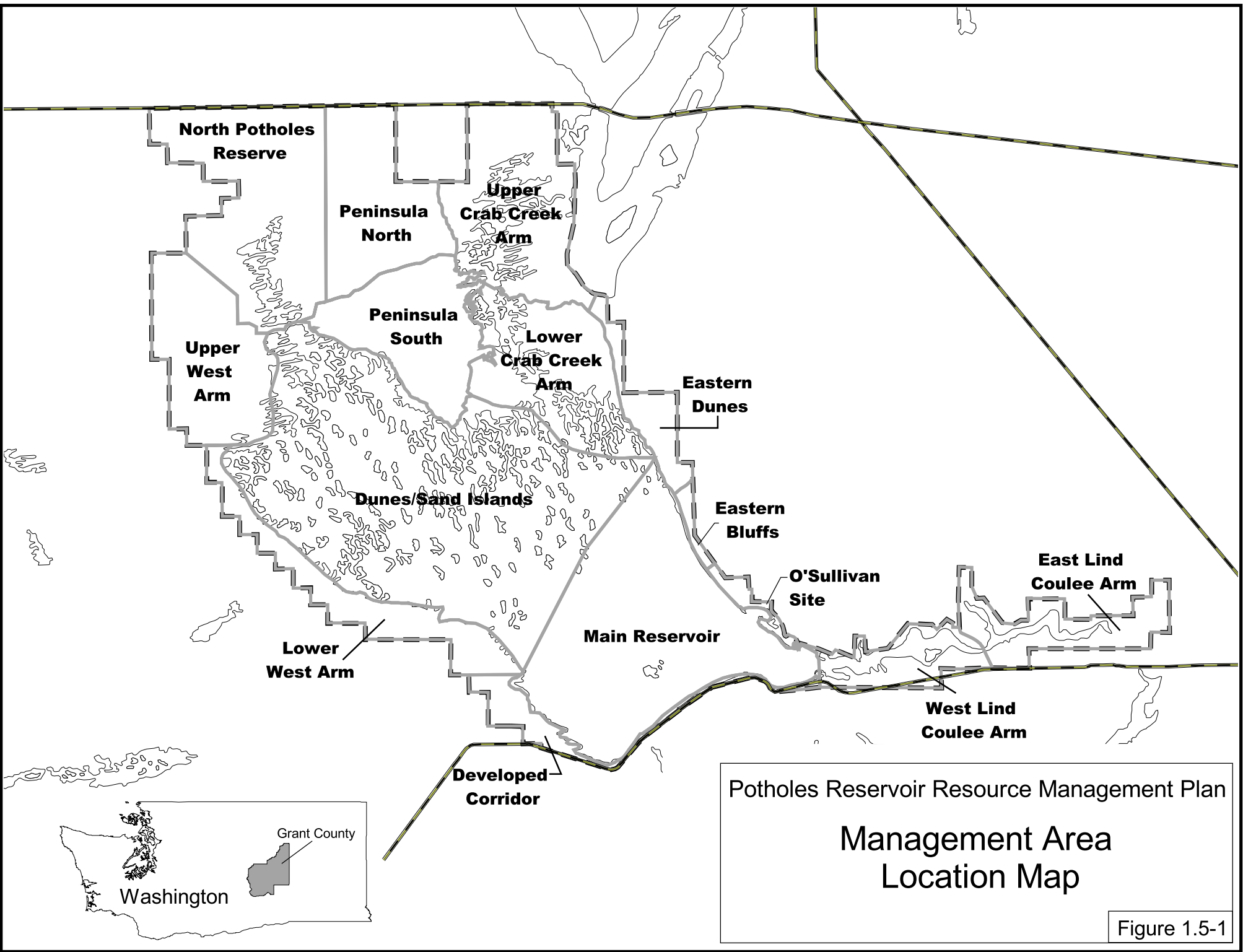
- 1 Introduction to the Resource Management Plan
 - 2 Agency Coordination and Standards
 - 3 Existing Resource Conditions
 - 4 Resource Goals and Objectives
 - 5 Land Management Area Recommendations
 - 6 Monitoring
 - 7 References
- Appendices

Subsections, corresponding with these chapters, can be located in the Table of Contents. Chapter 3, Existing Resource Conditions, provides a general description of the Potholes Management Area's existing natural, cultural, visual and socioeconomic resources. Chapter 4 specifically addresses each resource in the Potholes Reservoir RMP including: (1) General Management, (2) Recreation, (3) Public Health and Safety and Environmental Protection, (4) Land Use Management, (5) Grazing Management, (6) Natural Resources, (7) Cultural Resources, (8) Volunteer Programs, (9) Funding, (10) Information and Education, and (11) Facilities and Services. Chapter 4 also outlines the concerns, goals, and objectives for each resource by providing protocol, or guideline, for the management agency to follow. Chapter 5 outlines the specific management actions for each of the 16 LMAs identified within the Potholes Management Area (see Figure 1.5-1, Management Area Location Map).

1.6 POTHOLE RESERVOIR MANAGEMENT AREA DESCRIPTION

O'Sullivan Dam was constructed nearly 50 years ago forming Potholes Reservoir. The reservoir was created as part of the CBP to provide irrigation water to the fertile but arid lands of the Columbia Plateau in central Washington State. Potholes Reservoir generally fills up in the winter and early spring months, with the water level falling from May through September in response to irrigation demand.

At O'Sullivan Dam, the Potholes East canal flows southward from the Potholes Reservoir outlet to the southern portion of the CBP's irrigation area. Reclamation operates the reservoir within established constraints for surface water elevation to meet contractual obligations, assure public safety, and protect property. Other resource needs are viewed as secondary within existing operational constraints.



Potholes Reservoir Resource Management Plan

**Management Area
Location Map**

Figure 1.5-1

Interstate 90, to the north, and state route (SR) 17, to the east, are the primary travel corridors for Potholes Reservoir. Interstate 90 separates portions of Moses Lake to the north from Potholes Reservoir to the south. SR 262 provides access across O'Sullivan Dam along the south shore of the reservoir. Local city and county roads also serve the Potholes Reservoir area. Some shoreline areas can only be accessed by boat.